DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 147 RC 022 305

AUTHOR Dewees, Sarah
TITLE The School-within-a-School Model. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, Charleston, WV.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-RC-99-2
PUB DATE 1999-12-00
NOTE 4p.
CONTRACT ED-99-CO-0027
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC/CRESS, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325-1348. For full text: http://www.ael.org/eric/publicat.htm#digests.
PUB TYPE ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *House Plan; Institutional Autonomy; Outcomes of Education; *School Restructuring; Small Schools
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests; *Sense of Community

ABSTRACT

To capture some of the benefits of small-scale schooling, educators are looking for ways to downsize, including dividing large schools into subunits or "schools within a school." This approach establishes within the school a smaller educational unit with a separate educational program and its own staff, students, and budget. This digest introduces the school-within-a-school concept, summarizes existing research, and reviews advantages and disadvantages. The various models used to downsize large schools differ on many factors, but the school-within-a-school model has the greatest levels of autonomy and distinctiveness. Because this model most closely replicates a small school, it is most likely to produce the positive effects of a small-scale educational organization. The literature suggests that implementation of the school-within-a-school model has met with varying success in different settings. The most critical factor is commitment to full implementation, allowing for complete administrative separation of the subschool and the creation of a separate identity. While research results are limited, this model has the potential to contribute to increased student well-being, sense of community, student achievement, and educational attainment. The model is especially promising for disadvantaged students, who are more likely to attend large schools. It is a cost-effective approach to school reform, but the challenge lies in successful implementation. (Contains 30 references.) (SV)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 438 147

EDO-RC-99-2

December 1999

The School-within-a-School Model

Sarah Dewees

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools
including
Alaska Natives and American Indians, Mexican Americans, Migrants, and Outdoor Education

AEL
PO Box 1348
Charleston, WV
25325-1348

RC022305

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EDO-RC-99-2

December 1999

The School-within-a-School Model

Sarah Dewees

ERIC DIGEST

In an age of reform and restructuring, educators are seeking new models to improve their schools. One approach is to replicate the qualities, and hopefully the advantages, of a small school by creating a "school-within-a-school." This approach establishes within the school a smaller educational unit with a separate educational program, its own staff and students, and its own budget. Several cities, including New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago, have experimented with this as a method for downsizing (Raywid, 1995). This Digest briefly introduces the school-within-a-school concept, summarizes existing research on school-within-a-school models, and reviews some of the advantages and disadvantages.

Downsizing and the School-within-a-School Model

A great deal of research suggests that smaller schools contribute to student achievement, attainment, and sense of well-being (Cotton, 1996a; Fowler, 1995; Howley, 1994; Howley & Bickel, 2000; Lee & Smith, 1995; Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1995; Rutter, 1988). To capture some of the benefits of small-scale schooling, educators are increasingly looking for ways to downsize, including dividing large schools into subschools or subunits. This approach is especially useful given the large number of schools that have been built recently based on the assumption that "bigger is better." The literature on school downsizing has been inconsistent in its descriptions of how large schools are divided into subunits. The most precise definition of a school-within-a-school model comes from Mary Anne Raywid (1995):

> A school-within-a-school is a separate and autonomous unit formally authorized by the board of education and/or superintendent. It plans and runs its own program, has its own staff and students, and receives its own separate budget. Although it must negotiate the use of common space (gym, auditorium, playground) with a host school, and defer to the building principal on matters of safety and building operation, the school-within-a-school reports to a district official instead of being responsible to the building principal. Both its teachers and students are affiliated with the school-within-a-school as a matter of choice (p. 21).

Large schools have implemented a myriad of programs to downsize or downscale: house plans, minischools, learning communities, clusters, charters, and schools-within-schools. Each model differs from the others on a range of factors, including how separate the subunit is from the larger institution and how much autonomy it receives to manage its own education program. The models also differ in terms of programs and organizational structure and practice (Raywid, 1995). Some simply group cohorts of students together while maintaining a symbolic and administrative identification with the larger school. The school-within-a-school model has the greatest levels of autonomy, separateness, and distinctiveness. Students follow a separate education program, have their own faculty, and identify with their subschool unit. Because the school-within-a-school model replicates a small school more closely than the other forms of downsizing, it is most likely to produce the positive effects of small-scale educational organization.

A review of the literature suggests that implementing the school-within-a-school model has met with varying degrees of success in different settings. The most critical factor for success is a commitment to implementing the program fully, allowing for complete administrative separation of the subschool and the creation of a separate identity (McCabe & Oxley, 1989; McMullan, Sipe, & Wolfe, 1994; Raywid, 1996b). Without full implementation, many of the benefits of small-scale schooling, such as establishing community and symbolic identity, cannot be realized. Staff and student support is also important, and the strengths or weaknesses of a particular plan may vary over the years with personnel changes. Obtaining the support of the superintendent, school board, and school principal is also essential.

Outcomes Associated with the School-within-a-School Model

While considerable data exists on outcomes associated with small schools, there is much less evidence about outcomes associated with school-within-a-school programs (Cotton, 1996b). In part, this is because very few school-within-a-school models have been fully implemented. A growing body of literature does suggest that downsized school models can have a positive impact on students, including improved attendance rates, improved behavior, greater satisfaction with school, and greater self-esteem (Aschbacker, 1991; Corcoran, 1989; Fouts, 1994; Gordon, 1992; Raywid, 1996a; Robinson-Lewis, 1991; Tompkins, 1988). Additionally, there is a positive impact on teachers, who have reported enhanced morale (Fouts, 1994; Robinson-Lewis, 1991). Some case studies suggest that a school-within-a-school can contribute to a greater feeling of "community" among participants, which facilitates student attainment. Greenleaf's research (1995) suggests that "creating learning communities for young people ... increased their social commitment to one another and to their teachers, thereby increasing their personal investments in school" (p. 46). Evidence related to educational achievement is less clear. Several studies provide evidence that school downsizing models can contribute to increased educational achievement and attainment (Crain, Heebner, & Si, 1992; McMullan, Sipe, & Wolfe, 1994; Robinson-Lewis, 1991). Some research, however, suggests that subschools produce only moderate or mixed gains in

Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools
including
Alaska Natives and American Indians, Mexican Americans, Migrants, and Outdoor Education

AEL
PO Box 1348
Charleston, WV
25325-1348

RC022305

achievement (Robinson-Lewis, 1991; Jokiel & Starkey, 1972; Morriseau, 1975).

Other research has identified fiscal and organizational advantages and disadvantages of the school-within-a-school model. Aside from the advantages of replicating the qualities of a small school, the school-within-a-school appears to be a cost-effective approach to school reform in terms of start-up costs, and in some cases is less expensive to maintain (Moffett, 1981; Public Education Association [PEA], 1992a; PEA, 1992b; Raywid, 1995). Among the disadvantages, research suggests this model can sometimes create divisiveness in schools because it tends to realign organizational structures and fracture preexisting relationships. Conflicts can arise concerning allegiances to the larger school versus the smaller school unit, thus creating rivalries (Muncey & McQuillan, 1991; Raywid, 1996b). Other critics maintain that subschool groupings can lead to inequitable tracking if only one population is targeted for a subschool (Raywid, 1996a; McMullan, Sipe, & Wolfe, 1994). Another critique argues that the school-within-a-school model may negatively affect school coherence and the role of the principal, two areas of concern in the literature on effective schools.

Conclusion

The school-within-a-school model may be an effective and affordable way to capture the benefits of smaller-scale schooling within larger school buildings. While research results are limited, the school-within-a-school model has the potential to contribute to a greater sense of student well-being, a sense of student community, and higher student achievement and educational attainment. This model seems to hold promise especially for disadvantaged students, who are affected positively by smaller schools but are more likely to attend larger schools (Jewell, 1989; Lee & Smith, 1996). Because a subschool model can be adopted in an existing building structure, it is a cost-effective approach to school reform; however, the challenge lies in successful implementation. As Raywid (1985) observed, "The major challenge to schools-within-schools has been obtaining sufficient separateness and autonomy to permit staff members to generate a distinctive environment and to carry out their own vision of schooling" (p. 455).

References

Aschbacker, P. R. (1991). *Effects of restructuring on disadvantaged students: Humanitas—a case study.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.

Corcoran, T. B. (1989). Restructuring education: A new vision at hope essential high school. In J. M. Rosow, & R. Zager (Eds.), *Allies in educational reform* (pp. 243-274). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cotton, K. (1996a). *School size, school climate, and student performance.* Close-up #20. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 397 476)

Cotton, K. (1996b). *Affective and social benefits of small-scale schooling.* ERIC Digest. Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 410 088)

Crain, R. L., Heebner, A. L., & Si, Y. (1992). *The effectiveness of New York City career magnet schools: An evaluation of ninth grade performance using an experimental design.* Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

Fouts, J. T. (1994). *A school within a school: Evaluation results of the first year of a restructuring effort.* Seattle: School of Education, Seattle Pacific University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 370 195)

Fowler, W. J., Jr. (1995). School size and student outcomes. In H. J. Walberg (Series Ed.) & B. Levin, W. J. Fowler, Jr., and H. J. Walberg (Vol. Eds.), *Advances in education productivity: Vol 5. Organizational influences on productivity* (pp. 3-25). Greenwich, CT: Jai Press.

Gordon, R. (1992). *School within a school: Grades 7, 8, 9, 10.* Focus on program evaluation. Des Moines, IA: Des Moines Pubic Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 371 045)

Greenleaf, C. L. (1995). *You feel like you belong: Student perspectives on becoming a community of learners.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Howley, C. B. (1994). *The academic effectiveness of small scale schooling (an update).* ERIC Digest. Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 389 503)

Howley, C. B., & Bickel, R. (2000). *Results of a four-state study: Smaller schools reduce harmful impact of poverty on student achievement.* Washington, DC: Rural School and Community Trust.

Jewell, R. S. (1989). School and school district size relationships: Costs, results, minorities, and private school enrollments. *Education and Urban Society, 21*(2), 140-153.

Jokiel, B. J., & Starkey, J. (1972). Effect of a school within a school program on attitudes of underachieving students. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 076 592)

Lee, V. E., & Smith, J. B. (1995). Effects of high school restructuring and size on early gains in achievement and engagement. *Sociology of Education, 68*(4), 241-270.

Lee, V. E., & Smith, J. B. (1996). *High school size: Which works best, and for whom?* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Lee, V. E., Smith, J. B., & Croninger, R. G. (1995). *Understanding high school restructuring effects on the equitable distribution of learning mathematics and science.* Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

McCabe, J. G., & Oxley, D. (1989). *Making big high schools smaller: A review of the implementation of the house plan in New York City's most troubled high schools.* New York: Public Education Association; Bank Street College of Education.

McMullan, B. J., Sipe, C. L., & Wolfe, W. C. (1994). *Charter and student achievement: Early evidence from school restructuring in Philadelphia.* Philadelphia: Center for Assessment and Policy Development.

Moffett, J. J. (1981). *Options in secondary education: The school within a school concept.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona.

Morriseau, J. J. (1975). *The mini-school experiment: Restructuring your school: A handbook.* New York: New York Urban Coalition.

Muncey, D. E., & McQuillan, P. J. (1991). *School-within-a-school restructuring and faculty divisiveness: Examples from a study of the coalition of essential schools.* Working Paper #6. Providence, RI: School Ethnography Project, Brown University.

Public Education Association. (1992a). *Small schools and savings: Affordable new construction, renovation, and remodeling.* New York: The Association.

Public Education Association. (1992b). *Small school's operating costs: Reversing assumptions about economies of scale.* New York: The Association.

Raywid, M. A. (1985). Family choice arrangements in public schools: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 55*(4), 435-467.

Raywid, M. A. (1995). *The subschools/small schools movement—taking stock.* Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 397 490)

Raywid, M. A. (1996a). Taking stock: The movement to create mini-schools, schools-within-schools, and separate small schools. Urban Diversity Series No. 108. New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 396 045)

Raywid, M. A. (1996b). The Wadleigh complex: A dream that soured. In W. Boyd, R. Crowson, & H. Mawhinney (Eds.), *The politics of education and the new institutionalism: Reinventing the American school.* Philadelphia: Falmer.

Robinson-Lewis, H. (1991). *Summative evaluation of the school-within-a-school (SWAS) program: 1988-1989, 1989-1990, 1990-1991.* Kansas City: Kansas City School District.

Rutter, R. A. (1988). *Effects of school as community.* Madison, WI: National Center on Effective Secondary Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 313 470)

Tompkins, J. (1988). *Dropout prevention program, 1987-1988. Report of evaluation.* Des Moines, IA: Des Moines Public Schools.

Sara Dewees, Ph.D., is a research and development specialist for AEL's National Rural Specialty in Arlington, VA.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. ED-99-CO-0027. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI, the Department, or AEL.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools is operated by AEL, Inc. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia and operates the Regional Technology Consortium and the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education for these same four states. In addition, it serves as the Region IV Comprehensive Center. AEL is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

www.ael.org • 800-624-9120 • aelinfo@ael.org

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EDO-RC-99-2